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## CAMEROON PIDGIN ENGLISH (CPE) AS A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT** There has been a general consensus among language researchers that language is a key factor in economic development. This is because education and sensitisation are crucial elements in developmental endeavour. Given that there is no effective education without language, it is evident that language is one of the essential ingredients for nationhood. Unfortunately, the efforts that have been made in Cameroon in the past have yielded very little dividend for a number of reasons, one of which is the multiplicity of languages. In this paper, we show that Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) is a highly appropriate language for adoption as a pedagogical language in cities and other urban centres in Cameroon. This language, then, may not be the curse that it has been made to appear in the past, but rather a blessing in disguise.

**Key Words:** Cameroon Pidgin English; Empowerment; National Development.

### INTRODUCTION

Two factors stimulated this research, the first being the need for children to be adequately equipped with appropriate knowledge that will help them to become productive adults, and the second being the role of knowledge dissemination in equipping adults with the tools necessary for livelihood and nation-building in an environment that is plagued by all kinds of ills and catastrophes, mainly in the areas of the economy, health, environmental management, culture, land use etc. In Section 1 of this paper, we examine these two factors in turn, and show how they trigger a number of problems with respect to national development. We then show that there is a dire need for the linguistic equation to be balanced if the improvement of livelihood and alleviation of poverty are to be attained. This can be achieved only if appropriate languages are chosen for specific purposes and contexts, and in anglophone Cameroon this language is Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE)<sup>(1)</sup>, which unfortunately faces considerable opposition.

## MOTIVATION FOR LANGUAGE EMPOWERMENT

### I. Childhood Empowerment

The *prima facie* evidence that a child learns better and faster if he or she is taught in his or her mother tongue (MT) or home language in the first year of schooling, and as far up the academic ladder as possible (UNESCO, 1953), has triggered scholarly endeavour with respect to developing and using African indigenous languages in education. This effort has had scant success, especially in urban areas, for a number of reasons. One is that in urban areas, a single classroom can have children with different linguistic backgrounds. The question often asked is: Which of these languages should be chosen for use? Besides, many children in urban areas hardly ever speak Cameroonian indigenous languages. Even where an indigenous language could be chosen, the question of cost has to be answered first. In other words, making use of indigenous languages in education could entail a high cost, as the same material would have to be reproduced in many languages (Cameroon has 286 languages, Grimes, 2002), and teachers would have to be trained and recruited to instruct in these languages. Even if solutions could be proposed for these questions, policy makers need to be convinced of their necessity, a fact that contributes to the hands-off attitude that has developed with regard to the use of MTs in education.

### II. Adult Empowerment

The survival of any nation in the present world depends on that nation's knowledge of the environment, its economic output, the technical skills of its population in the areas of agriculture, land use, human rights, tourism, etc, and knowledge of information technologies, in order that the nation may gain easy access to global knowledge etc. Unfortunately, African nations seem to be caught at a crossroads, and are simply striving to catch up with the other continents in the global village. The result is that the countries of this continent have always been consumers rather than producers. Being aware of this, the current African Union has put in place the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) to foster Africa's development. Other efforts have been made in other forms with Pan-Africanist movements, symposia, workshops etc. being held almost everyday and everywhere. These efforts have not produced the required results. It should be remembered that the goals set by NEPAD at the beginning of the third millennium had not been achieved five years later, and the deadline had to be extended.

In many conferences and workshops, much is said about the empowerment of women, land use and environmental protection; additionally, population sensitisation through popular theatre or theatre for development, the institution of environmental education programmes in school curricula, and the abolition of some cultural activities that affect the use of land etc., are other areas of inter-

est in this respect. Issues such as these have been discussed repeatedly in workshops undertaken in the past, and they continue to surface in contemporary workshops. Therefore, we speculate that the problem lies in the implementation of the recommendations that have been made. In this respect, we have noticed that whatever the issue - child or adult empowerment, environmental issues, land cultivation, popular culture etc. - it all boils down to one larger issue: education of the population and sensitisation of the masses. This takes us back to a primary problem: that of the most appropriate medium for education or sensitisation. At this point, factor one and factor two find a meeting point. In other words, we can never sensitise or educate without language.

Our suggestion here is that the linguistic factor should be included in every effort made to attain some degree of national development, and that it is now necessary that policy makers start to listen to the suggestions of linguists. Without this, it will be difficult to get any programme going. In other words, whatever strategy is adopted to ensure national development, be it through popular theatre, lectures or formal education, an appropriate language is required, and the language most suited is the one that is best understood and spoken by the target population. The language question becomes, therefore, a key issue for any developmental effort.

With this in mind, this study looks at the possible problems that could arise if the linguistic component were to be incorporated into national developmental policies. Examining the linguistic situation in Cameroon, using statistics from earlier studies, we demonstrate that CPE is an appropriate language for use in the mass education of the Cameroonian population.

This paper proposes that the development and use of CPE in urban areas could solve many problems, and argues that it is, in fact, a blessing in disguise. The paper suggests that since CPE is one of the indigenous languages found in Cameroon, and is a MT for many children in urban centres of Cameroon, it is an appropriate language for use as a medium of instruction in these areas. This is in contrast to Mbufong's (2000) argument that it should be used across the entire area of anglophone Cameroon as a medium of instruction. It should also be used extensively in educational tools for adults and widely incorporated as the main language for popular theatre, as long as the audience is in anglophone Cameroon. The language should also be used in many more TV and radio programmes. In so doing, a wider audience could be reached and many more people would get the messages being propagated.

This paper is structured as follows: the following section presents the linguistic situation in Cameroon. The next section examines, briefly, some of the relevant arguments that have been advanced against the use of indigenous languages in education, especially in urban centres. The fourth section demonstrates that CPE is a Cameroonian language. In the fifth section, we demonstrate that it is a language of wider communication. The sixth section shows that the language is not only gaining ground in Cameroon but also that it is a mother tongue to many Cameroonian children in urban centres. The next section handles the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic developments that could be

obtained if middle-class women were to be targeted using CPE. We then examine problems that might arise if CPE is adopted in education and propose solutions to these problems. The paper ends with concluding remarks.

## THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN CAMEROON

There are 286 languages spoken in the Republic of Cameroon, by a population of about 14,305,000, people (Grimes, 2002). Of these languages, 279 are living, three are second languages without native speakers, and four are extinct. French and English were declared the two official languages of the country in 1961, that is, the languages in which all official government and educational business is carried out. In addition to the two official languages, there are auxiliary languages, used to enable routine communication between groups of people who have different native tongues. These languages are spread throughout the ten provinces of the country: Arabic, Wandala and Kanuri in the Extreme North Province, and Fulfulde in the Adamawa, North and Extreme North

**Table 1.** Languages of wider communication and regions of use in Cameroon

No.	Province	Lingua Franca(s)
1.	Extreme North	Arabic, Wandala, Kanuri, Fulfulde
2.	North	Fulfulde
3.	Adamawa	Fulfulde
4.	Littoral	Duala, Basaa, Pidgin
5.	South West	Pidgin English
6.	North West	Pidgin English
7.	West	Medumba, Mungaka, Pidgin
8.	Centre	Ewondo, Pidgin
9.	South	Ewondo
10.	East	Ewondo

Provinces. Basaa and Duala are present in the Littoral Province, Medumba in the West, with Pidgin English being prevalent in the South West and North West, and also in the West and Littoral provinces. Finally, Ewondo and Basaa are used in the Centre, South, and East Provinces. Table 1 summarises this.

Cameroon Pidgin English is present in five of the Provinces, although its impact is limited to the big cities of Douala and Yaounde, in the Littoral and Centre Provinces, respectively. In the North West and South West Provinces, it is the only *lingua franca*. This hegemonic status in these parts of Cameroon is indicative of its relevance for the speakers.

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST MT EDUCATION

A number of problems have been advanced with regard to the use of MTs in education, even though the advantages arising from the use of these languages have been well established. We will examine some of these problems briefly below.

### I. Numerous Indigenous Languages

As noted earlier, Cameroon has 286 languages. In urban centres, there are likely to be pupils in the same classroom with various different linguistic repertoires. The question often arises as to which language should be used in a classroom situation where indigenous languages are used as the medium of instruction? Should the classes be split according to the different languages? This is impossible, as some of the classes will have only one or two pupils. Furthermore, teaching would become very costly, as almost every student in such a classroom would need a different teacher who is competent to teach that student in that language. Besides, the same material would need to be reproduced in different languages, which would aggravate the cost burden. It should be pointed out here that in other multilingual communities, like Nigeria, where local languages have been successfully used and taught in schools, not all of the approximately 450 languages have been used. In Nigeria<sup>(2)</sup>, for example, only three of these languages are generally used, namely, Igbo in the East, Hausa in the north and Yoruba in the West. It is possible to use these languages because they are, according to Bamgbose (1991), Languages of Wider Communication (LWCs). Almost every Nigerian speaks at least one of these languages, even if they speak other minority languages as well. In this case, it is possible to regionalise the languages used in education. The question of cost is no longer an issue as only three of the approximately 450 languages are used. Cameroon does not have any natural indigenous languages that can serve as LWCs as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba do in Nigeria. Some language planners have suggested that these LWCs can actually be created by grouping languages into clusters, given that it is not possible to develop and use all of the languages. Using this proposal, languages could be grouped

into clusters of mutual or near mutual intelligibility, and the following groups could be built:

1. a. Mankon, Pinyin, Nkwen, Mbili, Awing, etc. (the Ngemba Cluster)
- b. Mokpe, Duala, Akoose, etc. (The Narrow Bantu cluster)
- c. Bulu, Eton, Ewondo etc.
- d. Others

This, it is hoped, would reduce the number of languages to a manageable size, and students of each cluster would be helped to cope with the challenges of the standard in each cluster. The idea here is that, even if a child has to learn the language in a cluster, it will be easier than learning an exoglossic language, like English or French, which are currently being used. This is because the languages in each cluster would have almost the same characteristics and would either be mutually intelligible or near mutually intelligible.

It should be pointed out here that if this option were to be adopted as a solution, a number of problems would still remain; children from different clusters would still meet in the same classroom in urban centres. The merit of such a proposal is that it would reduce costs relative to the cost in non-cluster situations. Even so, reducing Cameroon's 286 indigenous languages (Grimes, 2002) to clusters might result in about 100 cluster languages. There would still be the problem of managing them. Thus, even the question of cost is not properly addressed by this option. Material would still have to be produced in different languages, and teachers would still have to be trained to teach in these languages. It is clear, therefore, that clustering languages might reduce costs to some extent, but it would not solve the problem of cost. While it is true that there can be no achievement without cost, it is also desirable that such costs be kept to the minimum.

## II. Ethnic Rivalry

One problem that has been identified in the use of MTs in education is that it could create tension by encouraging ethnic rivalry, ethnic animosities, and conflicts that could lead to national disintegration. The issue at stake here is that in any cluster, one of the languages within the cluster would have to be selected as the standard. Such a decision could lead to protests from the speakers of the other languages in the cluster. This could lead to inter-ethnic conflict. One way of resolving such a problem would be to resort to standard creation. In other words, instead of choosing one of the languages in a cluster to standardise, a standard could actually be constructed. Such a construction could be drawn from all the languages in that cluster.

The fear is that when this problem is solved at one level it may resurface at another level; for example, members of one cluster might group together against members of other clusters. We are aware of the 'kam no go'<sup>(3)</sup> (come no go) syndrome in the coastal region of Cameroon. It should be noted in this regard

that language is an embodiment of the culture of the people who speak that language. Even if it were possible to take measures that could deal with such issues, the potential for trouble in this situation scares off language policy makers and, ipso facto, encourages a foot-dragging attitude towards MT education. It should be noted that, in the past, the Department of Linguistics of the then University of Yaounde started teaching three of the Cameroonian languages: Ewondo, Douala and Hausa. However, the programme died before it could actually gain some ground. This was simply because questions of ethnic identity started to emerge, and people started to question the criteria that led to the choice of those languages. Such problems led to the demise of the programme and this dealt a blow to the indigenous language cultures that the colonial masters had developed for the nation.

The two problems discussed above, and many others not examined here, have made it difficult for Cameroonians, and for Africans as a whole, to benefit from MT education (see Adegaju 2004 for a discussion of this issue). The point here is that the situation would be improved if there were an indigenous language that could serve as a medium of wider communication, one that belongs to no ethnic, political, or religious group. What is required is a neutral medium that is used by all and sundry, like Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba in Nigeria, as mentioned above.

Of the languages that are used in Cameroon, excluding the exoglossic languages English and French, CPE seems to have the characteristics enumerated above and could therefore be used as a medium of instruction in multilingual settings like urban centres, especially in anglophone Cameroon. However, a number of issues remain that could hinder the adoption, standardisation and use of the language for educational purposes. These issues include:

2. a. Is CPE an African language?
- b. Is it really a MT?
- c. Is it a language in its own right or merely a pidgin version of English?
- d. Is it widely used?

Quite a lot has been said in the literature concerning most of these questions. We consider them in turn in the next section of this paper, reviewing some of what has been said by earlier researchers, and provide more data to show that the answers to all of the above questions is “yes”.

## CPE AS AN AFRICAN LANGUAGE

Many arguments have been made to the effect that CPE is a pidgin version of English and that it is not an African language. It has been said that the use of it in education would defeat the whole purpose of that education. In other words, that adopting CPE would simply mean using a simplified form of English, which is worse than using the English language itself. But CPE is



an African language. It is true that the English Language is the lexifier of CPE, but the language has adopted the syntax of African languages, as well as prosodic features like tones. It has adopted the sound system of African languages, as shown in the data below.

	CPE		Bafut
3a. (i)	<i>í kẫm</i> he come	3b. (i)	<i>à zî̃</i> he come
(ii)	<i>í bî̃ kẫm</i> he Past come	(ii)	<i>à kî̃ zî̃</i> he Past come
(iii)	<i>í bî̃ dǒ̃ŋ kẫm</i> he Past Perfect come	(iii)	<i>à kî̃ lémêñ zî̃</i> he Past Perfect come
(iv)	<i>í bî̃ dǒ̃ŋ dî̃ kẫm</i> he Past Perfect Prog. come	(iv)	<i>à kî̃ lémêñ káñ zî̃</i> he Past Perfect Prog. come
	Meta?		English
3c. (i)	<i>mèrî̃ yè̃?é̃</i> he come	3d. (i)	he comes
(ii)	<i>mèrî̃ kè̃? yè̃?é̃</i> he Past come	(ii)	he came
(iii)	<i>mèrî̃ kè̃? yè̃?è̃</i> he Past come + Perfect	(iii)	he had come
(iv)	<i>mèrî̃ wè̃ kè̃? yè̃?è̃</i> he Perfect Past come	(iv)	he had already been coming

The data above illustrate that CPE has the syntactic structure of African languages. (3a) contains data from CPE juxtaposed with data drawn from Bafut (3b), Meta? (3c) and English (3d). Bafut and Meta? are two Cameroonian indigenous languages of the Ngemba and Momo families, respectively. In the Meta? data, the perfect aspect marker is a floating low tone, which is realised on the verb *yè̃?è̃* 'come'. This explains why this word surfaces with a final low tone in the perfect (aspect) sentence in (3c.iii), whereas in (3c.i) and (3c.ii) it surfaces with a final high tone.

An examination of the tense, aspect, and mood systems in the data reveal that the system in CPE is exactly like that in Bafut and Meta?. While in African languages and CPE these morphemes are separate/morphemes in the syntax of these languages, the system in the English language is solely inflectional, with tense marked by verbs. In other words, tense, aspect and mood in English are shown in the change of the form of the verb. This demonstrates that it is logical to associate CPE with an African language rather than with English.

Besides this, the sound system of CPE resembles African languages more than it does English. For example, while diphthongs and triphthongs exist in the English language, they are clearly absent in African languages and CPE (see Chumbow & Tamanji, 1994; Mutaka & Tamanji 2002; Neba *et al.*, 2004). The very fact that it has been argued that CPE has a negative influence on the learning of English (see Alobwede, 1998; Ayafor, 2004) attests to the fact that CPE is a totally different language to the English language.

With regard to the question of whether CPE is a pidgin or a Creole, it should be recalled that a pidgin, in the real sense of the word, is a simple makeshift contact language that develops when people of different linguistic backgrounds meet and must interact with one another. A pidgin in this regard, is a marginal language that arises to fulfil certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language. It cannot and does not satisfy all the linguistic needs of the people using it (Todd, 1990). Cameroon Pidgin English is no longer a makeshift language and has, as argued in Ayafor (2000: 6), grown to maturity, as a language can, and satisfies the complex linguistic needs of many people. Kouega (2001) has come to this conclusion after discovering, with the use of a questionnaire, that CPE is being used in all functional domains in the country. As a matter of fact, it has been creolised in that, as shown in the next section, it has and still is becoming a MT to many Cameroonian children, and can therefore satisfy the needs of an entire community of speakers. CPE is therefore no longer a pidgin version of English but is now a language in its own right. Ayafor (2006), drawing inspiration from Schneider (1963), Todd (1990), Ayafor (1996), McArthur (1998) and Ayafor (2000), has recommended that it should no longer be called Pidgin English but rather “Kamtok”. Schröder (2003), noticing the functional importance of the language, has proposed the appellation CamP. The effort made by these researchers to have the name “Pidgin English” changed is indicative of the fact that the language is no longer a pidgin.

## CPE AS A LANGUAGE OF WIDER COMMUNICATION

As mentioned above (cf. section 1), CPE is used across the board, and appears in all functional domains in Cameroon. Indeed:

“[...] ce qu’on appelle *pidgin-english* au Cameroun est, en vérité, une langue qui a un éventail fonctionnel beaucoup plus large que celui qu’on attribue ordinairement aux pidgins” (Feral, 1989: 25).

Much more recently, Schröder (2003: 181) summarised the numerous extended functions of CPE (CamP), as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The functions of CPE (CamP) in Cameroon

	In general	Anglophones	Francophones
education	●	●●	●
mass media	●●	●●	●
political campaign	●●●	●●●	●
administration	●	●●	●
work	●●●	●●●●	●●
religion	●●●	●●●●●	●●
trade	●●●	●●●●●	●●
literature and performing arts	●	●●	●
science and technology	●	●●●	
literary topics	●	●●●	
politics	●	●●	
humor	●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●
intimacy	●●●	●●●●	●●
secret	●●●	●●●	●●
national and cultural identity	●	●	●

●●●●● very high, ●●●● high, ●●● medium, ●● low, ● very low frequency use

## CPE AS A MT TO MANY CAMEROONIANS

The dynamism and range of CPE has made this lingua franca a major language in the Cameroon linguistic scene. CamP or CPE, like other pidgins the world over, is the result of a contact process among people who do not share a common language (Crystal, 1987). Historically, it started in Cameroon in 1472 when the coastal inhabitants of Cameroon first had contact with European explorers. During this year, the Portuguese arrived in Cameroon and settled in the coastal region of Cameroon. Chumbow and Simo-Bobda (1995) have noted that the earliest pidgin spoken in Cameroon was a Portuguese-based pidgin. This pidginisation process continued with the coming of the Germans in 1884. The interaction of the Germans with the local population in the large plantations, coupled with the constant visits of British nationals, who were the main

trade partners of the Germans, gradually led to the birth of Pidgin English. It should be noted that, at this time, the British were in Nigeria, a territory very close to South West Cameroon. The fact that the Germans hired many British nationals to work with Africans in the plantations accounts for the gradual transformation of the Portuguese based pidgin to an English-German based pidgin. This Anglo-German based pidgin developed into a full English-based pidgin when the Germans left Cameroon after the First World War, giving the British a monopoly over the entire coastal region. In fact, Cameroon was divided into two; the coastal region was given to Britain as a trustee territory while East Cameroon was given to the French. Thus, the coastal area today is English speaking, while East Cameroon is French speaking. Administratively, the region that was under British rule is made up the North West and South West Provinces. They share a boundary with Nigeria, a former British colony. Given that the English language was the only foreign language spoken by the foremen in the plantations, Pidgin English stabilised as the natives struggled to communicate with their British masters. Thus, a language that developed as a casual means of communication has gradually become the main language of socialisation for many Cameroonian children living in the South and North West provinces and in other major cities of Cameroon. The following authors share this opinion.

Koenig, *et al.* (1983: 78) presented the following figures on English and CPE acquisition by children in major anglophone towns in Cameroon.

4.	E	CPE
Bamenda	1%	22%
Mamfe	0%	25%
Kumba	1%	19%
Buea	7%	26%
Limbe	4%	31%

Alobwede (1998) presented the following figures on the acquisition of CPE in major cities in Cameroon.

5.	E	CPE
Bamenda	3.5%	24%
Mamfe	1.0%	25%
Kumba	3.0%	22%
Buea	13.0%	28%
Limbe	9.0%	30%
Douala	6.0%	10%
Yaounde	8.0%	15%

Ayafor (2006) observed that, for many families in Cameroon, and in homes where the father and mother do not come from the same ethnic group or lin-

**Table 3.** CPE (CamP) as a mother tongue in some major towns in Cameroon.

<b>BMD</b>	<b>BUEA</b>	<b>DLA</b>	<b>DSG</b>	<b>YDE</b>	<b>EBLW</b>	<b>BTA</b>	<b>MAR</b>
121	60	36	28	92	10	3	21
32.6%	16.2%	9.7%	7.5%	24.8%	2.7%	0.8%	5.7%
126	77	29	25	128	9	5	13
30.6%	18.7%	7.0%	6.1%	31.1%	2.2%	1.2%	3.2%

Adapted from Schröder (2003)

guistic background, especially in the anglophone region of the country, Kamtok (CPE) is the mother tongue of the children.

Schröder (2003) presented the statistics<sup>(4)</sup> in Table 3 to justify the status of CamP usage as a MT in the major towns listed in Cameroon.

This assertion can be empirically verified with the following figures obtained from a survey that we carried out at the University of Buea<sup>(5)</sup> in 2004. In this study, 400 students were asked to answer the question:

What is your mother tongue?

(Your MT is the language that you grew up with, speaking at home with friends, parents, and out of school).

6. An African Language:	55	12.00%
English Language:	35	9.25%
CPE:	300	75.00%
No MT:	10	2.50%

From these figures, it is clear that in this university, CPE acquisition as a MT is overwhelming. One thing to note is that, of all the anglophone students who responded that CPE was not their MT, almost 95% of them spoke or understood CPE, whereas not even 10% of them spoke or understood any one African language.

Judging from the data provided above, the conclusion can be drawn that the majority of anglophone Cameroonians in urban centres (at least) are acquiring CPE as a MT. It is spoken everywhere - in the market, in offices (even at the University of Buea, where its use is discouraged), in bus stations, in fact, everywhere. Even those who claim to speak the English Language as a MT really do not speak Standard English but speak Cameroonian English, which has shifted drastically from Standard English phonetically and syntactically. It has been argued convincingly that Kamtok has achieved its "*lettres de noblesse*" in Cameroon. Ayafor (2000) sees Kamtok as the ultimate unifying language for Cameroon. Chia and Tanda (2004) argued that the rural-urban exodus, due to

the search for jobs and better livelihoods, accounts for the demise of African languages. In such situations, the youth who come from scattered villages meet at the urban centres with different linguistic backgrounds, and the only medium of communication is CPE. Children who are born of these urban dwellers find no other language as a means of communication but CPE. This scenario is therefore fertile ground for the growth of CPE. Where typical African languages are dying out, they are gradually being replaced by CPE, which is, of course, another African language. Our fieldwork reveals that students at the University of Buea and in anglophone secondary schools around Buea, where this research was undertaken, always have to translate their examination questions into CPE before being able to answer them. This is further evidence that these children have CPE as a MT, given that it is the language they best understand and can best think in. Metuge (1996) argued that the language is so widely used now that it is crucially relevant for development, and that it should be developed as English for a specific purpose (ESP) so that individuals who come into Cameroon can learn this single universal language rather than learning several new languages as they enter different communities.

In view of the above, one thing is certain: CPE is very widely used in Cameroon. The present paper recommends that CPE should be adopted, standardised and used as a medium of instruction in urban centres, and that prejudicial attitudes against the language should be changed (i.e., the use of CPE should be encouraged). Once this is done, a number of problems could be solved, as far as the language question in Cameroon, in particular, is concerned.

## ADVANTAGES OF CPE ADOPTION AND STANDARDISATION

At the beginning of this paper, a number of problems were identified as obstacles to MT education. Having shown that CPE is a MT to many Cameroonians, that it is widely used, and that it is an African language, we argue in this section that once adopted, CPE will provide solutions to many of the problems identified, in addition to other problems.

### I. The problem of cost

If CPE is adopted as a medium of instruction in urban centres, the problem of cost will be solved. Only one language will have to be developed. Pedagogic materials can be produced in one language and teaching staff will be trained in one language, rather than in multiple languages. This will make training more effective, as the teachers themselves would already have acquired speaking and comprehension skills in CPE, and would have only writing skills to learn, in the main. This would be advantageous relative to adopting other Cameroonian languages, when some of the teachers would have to learn a new language in its entirety.

## II. The Problem of Identity

CPE belongs to no ethnic group; it is used by all and sundry, although varieties do exist. Thus, no ethnic rivalry would be engendered through its use, as would be the case with the adoption of any one of the Cameroonian languages. On the contrary, the language would serve, rather, as a factor for unity, as argued in Ayafor (2000), in that it would bring many Cameroonians together under one common umbrella language, i.e., CPE.

## III. The problem of multiplicity

This problem of multiplicity of languages does not arise, as only one language will be used in the classroom. As we have already shown above, many children in urban centres speak or at least understand CPE, so introducing it as a medium of instruction would present little difficulty. The few who do not have it as a MT would be helped to become acquainted with its use. They would not be learning an entirely new language, as would be the case with the use of Standard English as a medium of instruction.

Besides these advantages for the nation, CPE could serve as a transborder language (Chumbow, 2002). In other words, it could be developed and used to unify many African countries. This is because there are forms of Pidgin English all over Africa, in former British colonies such as Nigeria, Ghana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, etc. These different forms of Pidgin English serve as dialects and, once developed, could serve as a mark of identity for many Africans. In an era of globalisation, such a language could serve as a global language for Africans. Stories abound of how Africans from different countries have met in Europe and America and have had no other language but CPE as a means of communication. In such situations, they speak the language with pride, to the admiration of non-Africans. In such circumstances, there is no longer a question of francophone Cameroonian and anglophone Cameroonian; or of anglophone African and francophone African. All these boundaries are abolished. If such benefits are possible, why not develop and use such a unifying language? Why should Africans feel proud using this language abroad but not at home? A lot of work has to be done before CPE has the status that it deserves at home.

Related to the issue of globalisation mentioned above, CPE could be beneficial to the tourism industry, as manuals could be produced in CPE for tourists to learn as a medium of communication in many Cameroonian communities. In other words, if a tourist wished to visit a number of different linguistic communities, he or she would not need to learn the languages of these communities for initial communication, or travel with different interpreters through the various language communities. He or she could start with CPE, which has no linguistic boundaries as a medium of communication. We are aware of the fact that the multilingual nature of Cameroon is itself a tourist attraction, but we are recommending CPE as an initial universal language of communication, given its wide usage.

## CPE AS A TOOL FOR ADULTHOOD EMPOWERMENT

Though Cameroon desperately needs a population census to aid developmental efforts, estimates put the nation's population at about 15 million inhabitants. About 52% of these are female. Women constitute about 89% of the actors in the informal (economic) sector. About 70% of rural production (cash/food crops) relies on women (Grimes, 2002). Unfortunately, most of these women are not literate in either English or French, languages in which vital information leading to improved livelihoods is available. The fact that these women do not even speak these languages deprives them of advantageous knowledge. In what follows, we briefly examine the disadvantages incurred by these women *vis à vis* their life-sustaining activities.

To begin with, these women, who are the main channels for the preservation and transmission of Cameroonian cultural values, are mostly either totally uneducated or only partially educated. As such, they would have to undergo adult literacy training in English and French to be able to benefit from an education about the world around them. As we will see below, this poses so many problems that it discourages them from making the attempt. The result of this is socio-economic discrimination in various forms.

Even though their activities sustain the rural and urban populations, they are paid relatively poorly for their services. For example, what they earn in relation to the number of hours that they put in to produce the foodstuffs, handicrafts, and households, is not commensurate to their labour and, as a result, they are considered the lowest-ranked social class of their society, despite their supportive societal role. They are not well informed on how to properly manage their soil, improve their production, effectively preserve, advertise and sell their products, or how to search for profitable markets for their products. Sometimes, their inability to access good markets is because they cannot speak English or French.

The accessibility and availability of natural and new technological resources (land, water, electricity, modern apparatus etc.) and knowledge about their control and management, as well as new market and productive techniques are usually hard to come by, even without linguistic disadvantages.

The decreasing allocation of space and time to women's subsistence production frequently simplifies rural diets, especially where the new sources of income are not sufficient to purchase replacement food. They lack new technologies that would allow them to properly preserve their harvest and prevent waste, and better process their products to obtain better marketing returns. These women need information and educational empowerment to enable them to be recognised as important, nurturing and vital members of the society in which they live.

The shortcomings outlined above point to the fact that these marginalised women need locally and personally relevant information so that they can function effectively in their societies. They need adequate access to new information and technologies that can have an impact on their lives. Given that these



women need agricultural, fishing, and commercial information, it is appropriate that a medium that they can understand well should be used to disseminate this information to them. Once this is done, such women will be empowered, and the development of their knowledge on other national development activities, like the appropriate use of land, will be inevitable. For example, information on the costs and availability of agricultural inputs, such as improved seedlings, fertiliser suitable for the different soil types, the consequences of different pesticides etc. that have been tested and deemed appropriate for specific climatic conditions and soils, will reach the target population.

The issue here revolves around the question of which medium should be used for the dissemination of such information. Our answer, again, is that Cameroon Pidgin English would be appropriate for anglophone Cameroonians in rural areas. This is because, as we demonstrated earlier in this paper, this language is the most widely used *lingua franca* in the North West and South West provinces of Cameroon. The majority of farmers in rural areas, men and women alike, speak this language.

## CPE DISSEMINATION METHODS

The question now arises of the methods to be used to implement CPE as a means of disseminating the required information. As we mentioned earlier, most rural farmers are reluctant to undertake adult literacy courses of any kind for a number of reasons, some of which we discuss below.

Most consider it a luxury; they say that they do not need such a course to sustain their families, and that it is a waste of time. Doing such a course would mean abandoning the activities that provide them with their daily bread, and some feel ashamed to go to school as mature students. In view of this, the only other remedy is for local development groups to meet the groups concerned in their homes and farms etc., to pass information on to them. Some of these groups are already operational in the two anglophone provinces (i.e., the Mission de Développement du Nord-Ouest (MIDENO) in the northwest and the South West Development Authority (SOWEDA) in the southwest; there are also groups focused on women, NGOs, Njangi groups (social financial groups), market women, maternity groups, and church groups, all of which could serve as potential forums. CPE should be used to sensitise target populations, given that they speak and understand it. In this way, the adult literacy programmes could be avoided.

This has worked in some other settings. Consider the example of the Bahai International Community. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Bahai International Community embarked on a project in the countries of Cameroon, Bolivia, and Malaysia with the aim: "to encourage the empowerment of women by using traditional media - such as songs, dances and plays - to change the attitude of both women and men about the participation of women in community and family decision-making."

This project was initiated in 1993 and has shown dramatic signs of success. For instance in Cameroon, where the project has operated in seven villages, the men have begun to join women in the fields, they are consulting more with them about family finances, and they are allowing them greater participation in community decision-making. Surveys by outsiders who have visited the area attest to this fact. «There is a change,» said Madeline Eyidi ... [of] the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) office in Yaounde, Cameroon. «The women have traditionally done the farming, but I saw the men starting to participate. They are helping the women».

In an interview, Tiati à Zock, the national coordinator of the project in Cameroon, revealed that a survey done in early 1992 among some 45 families in each of the seven villages reported that the men made virtually all of the financial decisions alone. A follow-up survey, taken in 1993, indicated that more than 80% of the families now make such decisions in consultation between husband and wife. This, and many other positive changes, were recorded in the rural communities involved in the project. It is worth pointing out here that CPE was one of the main languages used in this project.

Judging from the success of this project, the dissemination of constructive new information and technology using CPE in all rural communities will lead to even greater success. Taking into account the fact that women from low-income groups, in either urban or rural areas, often mobilise in response to specific situations, it would seem likely that they would also easily organise themselves when it comes to things that will better their social and economic status. As such, reaching these groups of women should not be problematic.

The trend in projects designed to increase women's participation in wage labour is away from small income-generating projects in handicraft and weaving, as is commonly practised in Bamenda (suburbs), and towards the organisation of bodies that will facilitate the collection, exhibition, and search for better markets for their products across the nation and world-wide. This will also help to sell their culture beyond their particular territory and even abroad.

In the agriculture- and fishing-dependent communities, female group management could better inform farmers and fishers how, through their cooperative groups, they could improve productivity and quality, and how their products could be preserved through adaptable means of preservation (smoking, sun-drying, or deep-freezing), and how to properly transport these products to their potential buyers in good condition, without waste or depreciation of nutritional values. All of this information could be communicated to women lacking a formal education by using CPE through various new or traditional available media.

In conjunction with such projects, training in financial management and marketing is often considered essential. There are other development programmes that have responded to the need for credit by strengthening women's informal savings and credit groups, such as credit unions and the Credit Union Bank of Cameroon, etc., which are widely distributed throughout the provinces. Backed by the strength of their organisations, some women farmers should be able to obtain help through donors associated with various development programmes and projects.

## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

A number of problems are likely to be encountered in the process of this standardisation and adoption. We examine some of them below.

### I. Acceptability

Many people still do not accept and may mount some resistance to such a policy. Many arguments have been advanced to support their objection to CPE. One is that CPE has a negative impact on the English language. See, for example, Alobwede (1998), McArthur (1998), Bobda (1992), and Sure (1992). The issue here is that the people need to be educated. It is obvious that different languages that are in contact will influence each other, as Appel and Muysken (1987) have noted. CPE is no exception; substratum influence has been widely discussed and solutions have been proposed as to the handling of substratum influence in language classrooms. To the best of our knowledge, none of these solutions includes a ban on the substratum language. Rather, careful contrastive and error analysis of the situation has been proposed. To do this, it is crucially relevant that the substratum language should be developed so that its features can be compared with those of the target language; exercises should then be prepared for students to use to offset this kind of substratum influence. Thus, the solution to CPE substratum influence lies not in banning the language but in carefully developing it, so that differences between CPE and Standard English can be identified and measures put in place to solve such problems. In fact, Mbufong (2001) argued that it is not knowledge of CPE that influences the English language negatively in Cameroon but, rather, the fact that people lack knowledge of it, an assertion that we strongly agree with. In other words, CPE is not adequately studied linguistically and people, *ipso facto*, do not know where it ends and where Standard English begins. Consequently, students learning English often do not know the boundaries between CPE and Standard English. We think that if CPE were carefully studied, it would be possible to identify differences between the languages in the areas of syntax, phonetics and semantics; subsequently, children's attention could be drawn to these points in the language classroom. The less developed CPE remains, the more of a negative influence it has on the learning of Standard English. It should be clear that banning the language solves nothing. It would be impossible to stamp it out, as is revealed by the figures above. In fact, some people have argued that the more measures are taken to ban a language, the more it grows. However, we are aware that at least one author (Kouega, 2001) has argued that CPE is facing its demise in Cameroon. Given the trends in the country today, such a claim seems far-fetched. The language faces some opposition, and may be underdeveloped, but banishment is out of the question. Our recommendation is that CPE should be officially recognised and developed, if its negative influence on the English language is to be ameliorated.

Some people reject CPE because they argue that it is not an African lan-

guage. We strongly feel that this assertion arises out of ignorance and may, in fact, have no empirical basis. As we have illustrated in Section 3, the language, in its syntax and morphology, resembles African languages. For more on this, and the phonology and phonetics of CPE, see Fontem (2004). It should also be noted here that those who oppose CPE and propose banning orders on the use of CPE in education, actually use it in every other aspect of life. CPE is here to stay, and people must learn how to live with it.

## II. General Standardisation Problems

Some people have found it difficult to accept the use of CPE because of the multiplicity of dialects that it supports. It has been argued that too many varieties of the language exist, and that given these varieties it will be difficult to use. Others argue that it has no writing system and no literature.

Of course, these are normal language standardisation problems, and can be easily dealt with. There is no language without varieties, otherwise it would not be called a language. Language engineering and standardisation are all about selecting or creating a standard dialect, putting it into a written form, and producing literature in that language. These problems are surmountable and should be remedied. This is what we are suggesting in this paper. In fact, quite a lot of work has already been done in this area. Ayafor (1996) proposed a writing system for CPE, Ngome (1982) examined the vocabulary of CPE and undertook a lexico-semantic study of it, and Todd and Jumbam (1992) concentrated on the anatomy of CPE. Schneider (1963) looked into the first stages of developing CPE, which he called *Wes-Kos*. Besides these scientific works, one can cite other works that have been completed in this language; the Bible Society of Cameroon (2000) has translated the New Testament into CPE. These and other examples serve as the necessary background to an effective standardisation of CPE. The major work to be done in this regard is to synchronise all these works and propose one unified standard for the language, and then to propose a lexicon for it. Once this has been done, the aforementioned problems can be solved. Indeed, such problems are not unique to CPE, and they do not constitute a reason to banish it.

Another problem that may arise is that the development and use of CPE could endanger other indigenous languages, as many people might abandon their local languages in favour of CPE. We propose, therefore, that CPE adoption should occur only in the urban centres, where many people already use the language as a MT and CPE is widely used. The work that linguist groups like the BASAL PROJECT (see Tadadjeu, 2004) are already doing to encourage the use of African languages in villages will still continue. As has been demonstrated by the PROPELCA project (see Chia & Njumbam, 2004), many more children in the villages speak their local languages in preference to CPE. All that will need to be done is to continue to encourage the use of these indigenous languages. However, in urban centres, given the problems there and the advantages of MT education, there is no other option but to adopt CPE as an

officially accepted language, as there is no other language to fall back on. It is, therefore, a blessing and not the curse that many people have made it appear.

Our fear is that persecuting CPE will create a situation like that of having a driver whose feet are on both the accelerator and brake pedals at the same time. In other words, while scholars sit in workshops pointing to the woes of rural women, they are aggravating the situation by opposing the language through which these women could be empowered.

## CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this paper has been the argument that Cameroon Pidgin English (CamP) is a language in its own right, and that it is appropriate for standardisation and for use as the language of instruction in Cameroon schools in urban centres; it is also an effective tool for helping working women. This is because, as we have shown, the language is widely used in Cameroon and has been creolised. We have also demonstrated that, while there may be problems involved in the standardisation of CPE, such problems are easily surmountable, given that these are normal language-engineering problems that would be encountered by any African language. We have suggested that opposition to CPE only aggravates the negative influence that it has on the learning of Standard English in Cameroon. Rather, CPE should be developed and used, even in the teaching of Standard English. Opposition should therefore end, and people should be educated to abandon their negative attitudes and adopt a positive outlook with respect to the language. We also argue that in an era of globalisation such as ours, the language could serve as one of the global languages in the tourism industry. It could also be used as a transborder language, useful in the construction of identity and in the maintenance of peace and stability, as argued by Chumbow (2000). In this regard, the creolisation of CPE should be seen as a blessing and not a curse; its existence solves more problems than it creates. This paper recommends that work should be undertaken to carefully synchronise the linguistic work that has been done on the language so that a single recognised standard can be produced. Additionally, rural farmers could be educationally empowered through judicious use of CPE, the main medium of expression of working women, who are the primary labour force in the environmental landscape, the architects of the family, the socio-economic sustainers, and the transmitters of cultural tradition. If CPE is not developed and used, then the call for empowerment that has come from innumerable workshops and seminars will not produce any significant results.

## NOTES

- (1) This language has been named differently by different authors, ranging from the journalese WESKOS and KAMTOK, to Schroder's (2003) CamP. By and large, we use the name CPE throughout this paper. However, we use the other names when we are talking about the individual authors.
- (2) In so saying, we are not in any way supposing that the linguistic equation has been adequately balanced in Nigeria. Of course, minority language problems still exist there, but these are purely identity problems. Linguistically, some ground has been covered, given that it is possible to teach a multilingual classroom using one African language.
- (3) This is a slogan that was used in the South West Province of Cameroon against the settlers from the North West province. The slogan is in CPE, which shows how popular the language is. It is believed that the originator of the slogan was the then governor of the South West Province, Oben Peter Ashu.
- (4) The first row is the number of persons questioned, while the second row represents the percentage obtained.
- (5) The University of Buea is the only English-speaking university in Cameroon. A number of efforts have been made to discourage the use of CPE on campus. For example billboards have been mounted all over the campus with slogans against the use of CPE.

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## APPENDIX: List of Abbreviations

BASAL	Basic Standardisation of African Languages
CPE	Cameroon Pidgin English
LWC	Language of Wider Communication
MIDENO	Mission de Développement du Nord-Ouest
MT	Mother Tongue
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development.
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
Prog.	Progressive Aspect
PROPELCA	Operational Programme for the Teaching of Cameroonian Languages
SOWEDA	South West Development Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women



